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FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4984

INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS HELSINKI 000197

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DRL/AE FOR DAN NADEL OR CORTNEY DELL, EUR/NB FOR MIGUEL RODRIGUES, EUR/OHI FOR GREG MATTSON, EUR/OHI FOR CHRISTIAN KENNEDY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [APER](#) [KPAO](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [FI](#)

SUBJECT: FINLAND: ROMA OUTREACH 2009

REF: A. STATE 20359

[1B](#). 08 STATE 29991

[1C](#). 08 HELSINKI 00489

[¶1](#). (SBU) Post maintains strong ties with the Roma community in Finland and has remained active in Roma engagement. On April 17, PolOff and PAS Cultural Assistant attended the opening of a Romani written and directed play on Finnish minority stereotypes entitled "Botox". In February, PolOff attended a museum exhibition opening on the history of Roma in Finland. Post nominated Miranda Vuolasranta, a Roma activist now working with the Council of Europe, for the Woman of Courage award this year and maintains contact with her on Finnish activities. Post also maintains contacts with Finnish government officials on Roma issues; PolOff and Pol Assistant met with City of Helsinki officials on April 22 about their work on Roma migration, an assessment of the situation of Roma beggars who have come to Finland from Bulgaria and Romania.

[¶2](#). (SBU) Embassy Helsinki will track one proposed Roma-centered event currently in its early stages. In a meeting with Embassy staff on January 12, two leaders in the Roma community - Nina Casten and playwright Veijo Baltzar - expressed their intention to organize a seminar in 2010 that would address European Roma victims of the Holocaust. The two expressed disappointment with treatment of the Roma community in Finland, pointing for example at poor handling of Roma issues in the education system. Beyond Finland, they see a Europe-wide ignorance of the legacy of the Roma population's treatment during World War II, including poverty and unemployment, discrimination, and the dispersion of the Roma population across Europe. Baltzar and Casten wish to organize a "high level" conference that will include academics and diplomats and will address history, the arts, "lessons learned" and social integration. Poloff attended a follow-up meeting on the event with Baltzar and representatives of the City of Helsinki and various European embassies, and later referred Baltzar and Casten to the Holocaust Memorial Museum for background.

PLOSSER